United Nations A/C.5/55/SR.2

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
23 October 2000

Original: English

## Fifth Committee

**Summary record of the 2nd meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 19 September 2000, at 3 p.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)
*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions*: Mr. Mselle

## Contents

Election of the Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur

Organization of work

Agenda item 17: Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

Agenda item 122: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Agenda item 117: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

00-64853 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Election of the Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur**

1. **The Chairman** said that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/163, by which rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly had been amended, each Main Committee should elect a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. He would take it that the Committee wished to elect Mr. Park Hae-yun (Republic of Korea) and Ms. Dinić (Croatia), who had been endorsed by the Group of Asian States and the Group of Eastern European States respectively, as Vice-Chairmen of the Committee.

2. *Mr. Park Hae-yun (Republic of Korea) and Ms. Dinić (Croatia) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.*

3. **The Chairman** suggested that, since the Group of African States had yet to agree on a candidate, the Committee should defer to its next meeting the election of the Vice-Chairman from that Group.

4. *It was so decided.*

5. **The Chairman** said that, since there were no other nominations for the post of Rapporteur, he would take it that the Committee wished to elect Mr. Ramos (Portugal), who had been endorsed by the Group of West European and Other States, as Rapporteur.

6. *Mr. Ramos (Portugal) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

**Organization of work** (A/55/250; A/C.5/55/1; A/C.5/55/L.1 and A/C.5/55/L.2)

7. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to document A/C.5/55/1, which contained a letter from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee concerning the allocation of items to the Fifth Committee, to the note by the Secretariat on the status of preparedness of documentation for the Fifth Committee during the main part of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly (A/C.5/55/L.1) and to the Committee's proposed programme of work for the main part of the fifty-fifth session (A/C.5/55/L.2), which had been drawn up on the basis of the decision of the General Assembly contained in paragraph 13 of document A/55/250 on the organization of the fifty-fifth regular session of the General Assembly that the Fifth Committee should complete its work by Friday, 1 December 2000, in order to enable the Assembly to recess no later than Tuesday, 5 December 2000.

8. The General Assembly, on the basis of document A/55/250, had decided to recommend that morning meetings should start at 10 a.m. promptly, and, as a cost-saving measure, that all meetings should adjourn by 6 p.m.; that no meetings should be held on weekends; that, in order to avoid the late start of meetings, the quorum requirement should be waived; that delegations should be reminded of the utmost importance of punctuality; that delegations should strive to limit the number of reports requested from the Secretariat, as well as the debate on reports submitted; that the Fifth Committee should consider accepting without debate the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on the financial implications of draft resolutions up to a prescribed limit of $25,000; that no organ should take a decision involving either a change in the programme budget approved by the General Assembly or the possible requirement of expenditure unless it had received and taken account of a report from the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of the proposal; that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate Main Committee entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters; that items on which decisions were not required at the main part of the session should be deferred to a later session; and that similar items should be grouped together.

9. **Mr. Gaubert** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, expressed satisfaction with the proposed programme of work. The review of the scale of assessments applicable to the regular budget and the scale of assessments applicable to peacekeeping operations was an opportunity to revise the contributions of Member States so as to better reflect their capacity to pay and to place the Organisation's finances on a sound and equitable footing. The European Union also attached great importance to the issue of results-based budgeting and to the agenda item on human resources management. In that connection, it awaited with keen interest the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform.

10. It was to be hoped that the budget proposals for the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda would be issued by 1 October 2000 as stipulated in General Assembly resolutions 54/239 and 54/240. As a general rule, documentation should be issued in enough time to allow for in-depth consideration of the matters before the Committee.

11. **Mr. Hassan** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Committee's programme of work should be revised weekly. Priority should be given, in allocating time, to items on which decisions were required at the main part of the session. The chronic problem of late issuance of documentation must be addressed. In particular, the Secretariat must comply with the six-week rule and the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 54/248. Draft resolutions and decisions must be distributed in all the official languages before the Committee took action on them. Informal consultations should be conducted in a transparent manner and announced well in advance so that all delegations could participate. Lastly, the Committee should strive to complete its work without resorting to late-night or weekend meetings. If items remained pending when the General Assembly recessed, the Bureau should consider holding more meetings during the first part of the resumed fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly in order to reduce the backlog.

12. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) observed that priority had been given in the proposed programme of work to the agenda items on the scales of assessments applicable to the regular budget and to peacekeeping operations. While it was important that the Committee should complete its work within the allotted time, there was also a need for flexibility so as to ensure that it had sufficient time for consideration of those items. In particular, the Committee must have an opportunity, following the adoption of a decision by the General Assembly on the regular budget scale, to consider the impact of that decision on the peacekeeping scale before finalizing the latter.

13. **Mr. den Hartog** (Brazil) said that it was important to adopt a balanced programme of work that reflected the interests of all delegations. He was concerned that insufficient time had been allocated for consideration of such priority items as human resources management and the scales of assessments applicable to the regular budget and to peacekeeping operations and matters on which decisions were required at the main part of the session, including the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2002-2003 and the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. With regard to the proposed programme budget outline, the Committee had to consider the impact of the elimination of resources for special political missions, which was of particular concern to the Latin America and Caribbean region. As to the proposed medium-term plan, some elements, particularly the human rights subprogrammes, still required considerable work, despite the best efforts of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC). His delegation agreed that the programme of work should be revised weekly and that the holding of late-night and weekend meetings should be avoided.

14. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that she agreed with the representative of Nigeria, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, that the proposed programme of work must be balanced in terms of the time allotted for the consideration of the various agenda items. The Committee should give priority to items which required a decision before the end of the main part of the current session. Those items included the scale of assessments for the regular budget, the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2002-2003, results-based budgeting and human resources issues.

15. The proposed programme of work provided for the simultaneous consideration of the scale of assessments for the regular budget and the scale for peacekeeping operations. However, the Committee's deliberations and decisions on the methodology for the regular-budget scale were a first step in its consideration of proposals concerning the scale for peacekeeping operations. The programme of work should be adjusted to reflect those requirements.

16. The proposed programme provided for the consideration of the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the report of the Committee on Conferences in the next two weeks, but the relevant reports had not yet been issued; the Committee might, therefore, wish to postpone its consideration of those items. Conversely, nearly all the documentation concerning the proposed medium-term plan and the proposed budget outline had already been issued, so that those items could be considered at an earlier date. She recalled that the Committee for Programme and

Coordination (CPC), at its fortieth session, had recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to report on the implications of the new format of the medium-term plan for the cycle of planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. She hoped that that report would be available by the time the Committee began its consideration of the proposed medium-term plan.

17. Since the report on the use of United Nations Volunteers, which was to be submitted under agenda item 153, would affect the consideration of other issues, it should also be considered in connection with gratis personnel and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. She hoped that the Secretary-General's report on improving the financial situation of the United Nations would be available before the Committee began its consideration of that issue. She was concerned about the excessive number of reports scheduled for consideration in November. The programme of work should be adjusted to ensure that the Committee would have enough time to discuss the issues concerning human resources and the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

18. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Pakistan) said that his delegation shared the views of the Group of 77 and China on the proposed programme of work.

19. **Ms. Chin Powles** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada said that she supported the priorities currently reflected in the proposed programme of work. In particular, she was pleased that the discussions on the regular-budget and ad hoc peacekeeping scales of assessments were to begin at the same time, and welcomed the inclusion of the issue of results-based budgeting. The proposed programme of work reflected the priorities of the Secretary-General's Track II reform programme, introduced in 1997.

20. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation shared the views expressed on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and that it attached great importance to the consideration of the proposed medium-term plan, the proposed budget outline, human resources issues and the financing of peacekeeping operations. The proposed programme of work did not reflect the Committee's priorities in terms of the items on which it must take decisions at the main part of the current session, such as the scale of assessments for the regular budget, and was not balanced in terms of the number of meetings to be devoted to different items, particularly the proposed medium-term plan and human resources issues. Priority must be given to items with time limits and items that had been deferred from previous sessions. All draft resolutions should be circulated, in all the official languages, at least 24 hours before they were to be decided upon, and no night or weekend meetings should be scheduled, as recommended by the General Committee.

21. **Mr. Hays** (United States of America) said that a number of priority resource planning issues, such as human resources issues, the outcome of the fortieth session of CPC and the proposed budget outline, were to be considered at the current session. At the core of the Committee's considerations, however, was the need for comprehensive reform of both the regular-budget and the peacekeeping scales of assessments to place the Organization on a sound financial footing. In view of the need to balance the time allotted to the various agenda items, he supported the suggestion that the programme of work should be reviewed on a weekly basis. The first few weeks should not be overloaded, so that the Committee could develop a sense of how much time would be required for each item. He agreed with the Mexican delegation that the scales of assessments should be dealt with as transparently and coherently as possible and that, since the regular-budget scale formed the basis for the peacekeeping scale, any changes in the former should be decided upon in time to enable the Committee to deal with their implications for a future peacekeeping scale.

22. **Mr. Al Atrash** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that he shared the views expressed on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the delegations of Mexico, Brazil, Cuba and the Syrian Arab Republic. In setting its priorities, the Committee should allow enough time for consideration of the scale of assessments, the proposed budget outline and the budget for peacekeeping operations. He hoped that the proposed programme of work, which was not balanced in its current form, would be reconsidered and amended on a weekly basis in accordance with the priorities set by the Member States.

23. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the proposed programme of work for the main part of the session, on the understanding that adjustments would be made as required.

24. *It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 17: Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments**

**(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions** (A/55/102/Add.1; A/C.5/55/5)

25. **The Chairman** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General (A/55/102/Add.1) informing the General Assembly of the resignation of Mr. Ju Kuilin of China from the Committee on Contributions, and to another note (A/C.5/55/5) informing the Assembly that the Government of China had nominated Mr. Wu Gang to complete the unexpired portion of Mr. Ju's term of office. The Group of Asian States had endorsed Mr. Wu's candidature. In the absence of other candidates, he took it that the Committee wished to appoint Mr. Wu Gang of China as a member of the Committee on Contributions for the period from the date of appointment to 31 December 2002.

26. *It was so decided.*

**Agenda item 122: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations** (A/C.5/55/2)

27. **The Chairman** drew attention to a letter from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/55/2), transmitting the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions concerning requests for exemption under Article 19 of the Charter received from Burundi, the Comoros, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Sao Tome and Principe and Tajikistan.

28. **Mr. Gaubert** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, and, in addition, Iceland, said that he had welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 54/237 C, whereby all requests for exemption under Article 19 were considered by the General Assembly on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions. That more balanced and stable procedure would enable the States concerned to provide, at a very early stage, the information required for the detailed and objective consideration of such requests, and would lead to improvements in the quality of that information, of the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions and, therefore, of the General Assembly's decisions.

29. Currently, the provisions of Article 19 were in effect in relation to 20 Member States; that number was comparable to the figure recorded a year earlier. He was pleased to note that three Member States which had been granted an exemption until 30 June 2000 had already reduced their arrears to a level which enabled them to regain their right to vote.

30. Because it attached great importance to the obligation of all Member States to pay their contributions in full, on time and without conditions, the European Union had steadfastly advocated more rigorous application of Article 19, which was currently the only legal provision aimed at enforcing that obligation. Having noted the methodological comments of the Committee on Contributions, the European Union endorsed the recommendations on the granting of exemptions to three Member States under Article 19. Such exemptions must remain exceptional and temporary and must be granted only when the failure to pay was due to conditions beyond the control of the Member State concerned.

31. **Mr. Nurov** (Tajikistan) said that a letter from the Government of Tajikistan on the item would shortly be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly. Therefore, his delegation requested that further consideration of the item should be deferred and reserved the right to speak on it at the Committee's next meeting.

32. **Mr. Aboud** (Comoros) said that his country had experienced a period of economic and political uncertainty and instability over the past three years which had affected its ability to pay its assessed contribution. The current Government, which had inherited the difficult economic situation, had decided for the time being to accord priority to economic recovery and the well-being of the people rather than paying its arrears. It was optimistic that it would be able to meet its financial obligations to the United Nations in the near future. In the meantime, the Government intended to pay the minimum required amount for 2000 and the full arrears for 1999, and would like to arrange a schedule of payments for the remainder of its arrears.

33. **The Chairman** said that, in the light of the request from the delegation of Tajikistan, the

Committee would postpone a decision on that item until its next meeting.

**Agenda item 117: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001** (A/C.5/54/65 and A/55/376)

34. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to begin its consideration of the statement submitted by the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of General Assembly resolution 54/283, adopted on 5 September 2000, entitled "Review of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) in all its aspects. The resolution contained a proposal that a special session of the General Assembly should be convened to address the topic. The Assembly had been informed that, in view of the fact that ACABQ and the Fifth Committee could not meet at that time, the programme budget implications would be presented for examination and decision by the General Assembly at the current session.

35. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee (A/55/376), said that, at the time when the report had been prepared, requirements for the special session had not been expected to exceed $1.6 million. However, estimates might change, as no decision had yet been reached on the exact dates and modalities of the session, particularly the preparatory process. Therefore, the assumption made by the Secretary-General was provisional and subject to further confirmation.

36. The Advisory Committee, in paragraph 6 of its report, had stated that it agreed with the proposal of the Secretary-General, and recommended that the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, subject to the provisions for the use of the contingency fund, the cost of implementation of resolution 54/283 would not exceed $1.6 million.

37. **Mr. Gaubert** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union supported the convening of a special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS as a means of meeting the challenge of the AIDS epidemic in the most appropriate forum, the United Nations.

38. General Assembly resolution 54/283 had stated that the special session should be held before September 2002. At its current session, the Assembly would take a decision on the date for the session and the modalities for its preparation. As the calendar of conferences for 2001 was already quite full, the European Union favoured the holding of that special session in 2002.

39. Finally, it was regrettable that the statement of programme budget implications had not been submitted to the Committee before the adoption of the resolution, in accordance with rule 153, of the rules of procedure.

40. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation had supported the adoption of the resolution and the holding of the special session. There were a few questions and clarifications required, however.

41. First, reviewing the statement of programme budget implications after the adoption of the resolution constituted a procedural anomaly. On the question of the timing for the special session, there was an apparent inconsistency between paragraph 1 (a) of the statement by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/54/65) and paragraph 2 of the report of ACABQ. He also asked the Secretariat whether it was prepared to hold a major event such as the special session during 2001.

42. In paragraph 5 of its report, the Advisory Committee had questioned the travel and subsistence costs for one protocol officer from Geneva and one from Vienna for the session. He would be interested to know what had led the Advisory Committee to agree with the request, in the end.

43. With regard to annex III of document A/C.5/54/65, concerning the costs of the public information programme, the Department of Public Information had a large budget, which should allow costs for such events to be absorbed by adjusting and prioritizing expenditures.

44. **Mr. Fujii** (Japan) said that it shared the concerns expressed about the procedural anomalies.

45. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that he regretted that the statement of programme budget implications had not been available for consideration by the Committee before the adoption of the resolution. It had been issued on 1 September, before the 5 September adoption. The fact that the Fifth Committee and ACABQ had not reviewed it was the only procedural irregularity, and it was his understanding that rule 153 of the rules of

procedure had been satisfied. The Secretariat believed that, if it received adequate funding, it would be in a position to service the special session in 2001, although it would be difficult. In fact, the adoption of the resolution had been expedited so that preparations could begin as soon as possible.

46. With reference to paragraph 5 of the report of ACABQ and the travel of protocol officers from Geneva and Vienna for the conference, the time constraints of a session of only three days' duration gave rise to the need to augment the protocol staff with experienced officers in order to ensure adequate services to delegations. With regard to the three round trips between New York and Geneva, the UNAIDS secretariat was based in Geneva and most of the substantive work in preparation for the session would be done there. Liaison between the staff of the New York office of UNAIDS and the substantive office would be necessary.

47. Turning to annex III of the statement of programme budget implications (A/C.5/54/65), section 26 of the programme budget did not include spare resources for special conferences.

48. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), replying to questions about the date of the proposed special session, said that the words "not later than the end of its fifty-sixth session" had been taken directly from paragraph 1 of Assembly resolution 54/283. With regard to the travel requirements for liaison officers, it might be possible to ensure adequate liaison between New York and Geneva by making use of the modern means of communication that were available. The travel and subsistence for protocol officers from Geneva and Vienna might also be rendered unnecessary if protocol services in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) were secured to supplement the resources currently available in that area. The Advisory Committee, however, had not reduced the Secretary-General's estimates and had left it to the Secretary-General to implement the requirements of the resolution with flexibility.

49. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that there appeared to be a difference between the recommendation contained in paragraph 2 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/55/376) and that contained in the first paragraph of the summary of the statement submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/54/65), in that the first referred to "fifty-sixth session" while the second referred to "fifty-sixth regular session". His understanding was that the Assembly's regular session ended in December and that later meetings were held as part of a resumed session. He would welcome further clarification of that point.

50. His delegation shared the Advisory Committee's views regarding the travel requirements for the special session and hoped that the Secretariat would take those views into account in planning for the event.

51. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Assembly's regular session now lasted a full 12 months. A resumed session was still part of the current regular session. No later than the end of the fifty-sixth regular session therefore meant no later than September 2002.

52. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that HIV/AIDS had devastating implications for the progress of human life on the planet and must be addressed at the highest political level and with the utmost urgency. Some questions had been raised by the use of the contingency fund, but, in light of the clarifications that had been provided and the commitment of States to implement the General Assembly's decision, her delegation supported the recommendation to take the necessary action to permit the substantive preparations for the special session to begin.

53. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that, while his delegation's support for the holding of the special session was well known, the resources that had been requested for the three-day conference were more than had been requested for the Millennium Summit. The Secretariat should provide a breakdown of the amount of $790,000 that had been requested under section 1, overall policy-making, direction and coordination and clarify whether the $542,400 for conference-servicing requirements was included in the Secretary-General's request. If most of the costs would occur at the time of the special session, he wished to know what portion of those costs would require immediate approval to enable the planning for the event to go forward.

54. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the main question was

the composition of the amount of the $790,000 under section 1. Of that amount, $633,800 was required for the strengthening of the UNAIDS secretariat, $136,000 for the travel of representatives of least developed Member States and $20,200 for protocol services. As for the timing of the requirements, approval for provisions to strengthen the Secretariat was needed immediately so that the substantive preparations could go forward. The decisions on the other costs could be taken at a later date.

55. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), replying to the question posed by the representative of Canada, said that the Secretariat had indicated that conference-servicing requirements for the special session were $542,400. It had further indicated that no additional resources had been requested and that the amount would be absorbed. Overprogramming of meetings was a normal practice and was based on the assumption that some meetings would be cancelled. The Secretariat had recently indicated to the Advisory Committee, however, that it was approaching the point at which overprogramming might no longer be possible and that it was monitoring the situation very carefully. As a result, the Advisory Committee had itself requested that the capacity for delivery of services and for absorption of additional requirements be carefully monitored.

56. **The Chairman** asked whether those delegations that had expressed concerns were now in a position to join in a consensus recommending that the General Assembly should endorse the recommendation in Assembly resolution 54/283.

57. **Mr. Gaubert** (France) said that his delegation would like to continue the consideration of the item so that the Committee could have an opportunity to express its views in a less formal setting.

58. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Committee wished to continue its consideration of the item in informal consultations.

59. *It was so decided.*

60. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation again wished to draw the Committee's attention to the requirement that draft proposals be distributed 24 hours in advance of their consideration by the Committee and in all six official languages.

61. **The Chairman** said that note would be taken of the concerns just expressed by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

*The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.*